

KNOW AND ACT

Reproductive health of adolescents, women and men as a natural part of health care

A number of factors related to the parents-to-be, some already in existence before the beginning of pregnancy, have an effect on the conception, the course of pregnancy and the health of the child. Promoting sexual and reproductive health and maintaining fertility should be a natural part of the health care for adolescents and women and men of reproductive age.

The updated Action programme for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health uses the term **pre-conception health, care and counselling** for the international concept **pre-conception health and care**. It aims at:

- maintaining and promoting fertility and reproductive health
- safe conception, pregnancy, delivery and postnatal period
- a newborn who is as healthy as possible.

Pre-conception health, care and counselling includes

- bringing up the topic of pre-conception care, health and counselling in an active and positive manner
- the instruction of health education and sexuality education at schools – information about sexual development, fertility and its maintenance
- all counselling and care preceding pregnancy and maintaining fertility – even when planning a pregnancy is not yet topical, there is no desire to plan a pregnancy, pregnancy is not achieved despite the person's wishes, or pregnancy has ended in miscarriage or abortion
- systematic screenings for risks and problems endangering the health of the pregnant woman and the newborn
- treatment of recognised diseases and problems
- achieving the best possible health during pregnancy and for the unborn baby in case of chronic diseases

Evidence of benefits

According to research, there is strong evidence that the health of the pregnant woman and the newborn is supported by issues such as:

- avoiding harmful medications during pregnancy
- quitting smoking and alcohol use already prior to pregnancy or at the latest once the pregnancy has been confirmed
- weight management
- using folic acid supplement
- vaccinations, for example against rubella and hepatitis B
- prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases
- good care of chronic diseases, such as diabetes



Even before conception, the health, well-being and lifestyles of both parents impact the development of the foetus in the womb and the health of the unborn child, all the way to adulthood.

Counselling and care are provided by

- teachers and
- sexuality educators
- public health nurses
- midwives
- doctors
- sexual therapists and counsellors



Counselling founded on client's needs and values

When successful, counselling maintains and promotes sexual and reproductive health

- by increasing awareness
- by encouraging the individual or couple to take care of their reproductive health
- by supporting intimate relationships
- by helping clients make informed choices that fit their values

Areas of promotion of reproductive health

Nutrition

HEALTH COUNSELLING *Chronic diseases*

Lifestyles **Pregnancy history** **Vaccinations**

Mental health **Infections** **Psychosocial factors**

Involuntary childlessness *Prenatal screenings*

Female circumcision **GENETIC DISEASES**

USE OF MEDICATIONS **Special groups**

ENVIRONMENTAL AGENTS

Where is counselling and care provided?

- schools
- school and student health care
- occupational health care
- contraception counselling, family planning and maternity clinics
- primary health care when treating problems or diseases affecting reproductive health
- gynaecological appointments
- maternity outpatient clinics and delivery hospitals
- specialised health care when treating problems or diseases affecting reproductive health
- genetic counselling
- intimate relationships and counselling

**BRING UP ISSUES RELATED TO THE
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH OF ADOLESCENTS,
WOMEN AND MEN IN A POSITIVE WAY!
SHOW INITIATIVE!**

Further information

Edistä, ehkäise, vaikuta

– Seksuaali- ja lisääntymisterveyden
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Lehto (ed.). National Institute
for Health and Welfare.
Guide 33/2014

The priority areas of the
action programme include
children and adolescents,
supporting the resources of
parturients, multiculturalism
and men's sexual and
reproductive health.

www.thl.fi/kirjakauppa

Know and Act cards on many
different topics have been
prepared for professionals.
Read more:

**www.thl.fi/topics >
*Sexual and reproductive
health***

www.thl.fi/seliverkostokirje

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